

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

**This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:**

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (currently amended):       An ultrasonic transmitting and receiving apparatus comprising:  
an ultrasonic probe including plural ultrasonic transducers arranged in a two-dimensional array;  
plural transmitting circuits for respectively generating plural drive signals to be supplied to said ultrasonic probe so as to transmit an ultrasonic beam;  
plural receiving circuits for respectively processing plural detection signals output from said ultrasonic probe which has received an ultrasonic echo;  
switching means for ~~selectively connecting~~ changing electrical connection between (i) a predetermined number of ultrasonic transducers included in said plural ultrasonic transducers to and (ii) a predetermined number of transmitting circuits included in said plural transmitting circuits and/or a predetermined number of receiving circuits included in said plural receiving circuits; and  
control means for controlling said switching means to partially change a sparse pattern of the ultrasonic transducers, which transmit and/or receive ultrasonic waves, in accordance with a steering direction of the ultrasonic beam to be transmitted.

2. (canceled).

3. (currently amended):       An ultrasonic transmitting and receiving apparatus according to claim 2 1, further comprising:  
rewritable storing means for storing information representing plural sparse patterns of ~~said predetermined number of~~ the ultrasonic transducers, which transmit and/or receive

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ultrasonic waves, in accordance with a steering ~~range~~ direction of the ultrasonic beam to be transmitted.

4. (original): An ultrasonic transmitting and receiving apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said switching means is disposed in an ultrasonic transmitting and receiving apparatus main body.

5. (canceled).

6. (original): An ultrasonic transmitting and receiving apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said switching means is disposed in an ultrasonic transmitting and receiving apparatus main body.

7. - 10. (canceled).

11. (currently amended): An ultrasonic transmitting and receiving method comprising the steps of:

(a) changing electrical connection between (i) a predetermined number of ultrasonic transducers included in plural ultrasonic transducers arranged in a two-dimensional array and (ii) a predetermined number of transmitting circuits included in plural transmitting circuits and/or a predetermined number of receiving circuits included in plural receiving circuits to partially change a sparse pattern of the ultrasonic transducers, which transmit and/or receive ultrasonic waves, in accordance with a steering ~~range~~ direction of an ultrasonic beam to be transmitted; and

(b) transmitting an ultrasonic beam and/or receiving an ultrasonic echo in accordance with the sparse pattern changed at step (a).